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C O N F I D E N T I A L ACCRA 000362

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TAGS: PREL PGOV PINR GH

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT KUFUOR ON INTERNAL SECURITY SITUATION

REF: A. ACCRA 0347

1B. ACCRA 0301

1C. 03 ACCRA 2404

Classified By: Ambassador Mary C. Yates, reason 1.5 (B/D).

11. (C) Summary. President Kufuor told the Ambassador February 23 that he has placed Ghanaian security forces on a quiet "state of alert" while he attends the AU summit in Tripoli. Concern over the recent activities of former President Rawlings, public allegations against Kufuor's National Security Advisor at the National Reconciliation Commission, and alleged grumblings from President Compaore of Burkina Faso, have heightened presidential jitters. While these concerns appear overblown, they do reveal the level of insecurity the GOG manifests when the subject is Rawlings and his supposed ability to make mischief for the Ghanaian government. End summary.

12. (C) On February 23 President Kufuor invited Ambassador Yates to the Castle for an informal discussion on Ghana's internal security situation (polchief attended as notetaker). Kufuor focused on his imminent departure for the AU summit in Tripoli, which coincided with the absence from Ghana of National Security Coordinator Francis Poku (in Washington for consultations, accompanied by our Regional Affairs Officer). High-profile appearances before the National Reconciliation Commission by former President Rawlings and, separately, Rawlings' long-serving security advisor Kojo Tsikata (ref B), had increased GOG security concerns, said Kufuor. "We are on a state of alert for the next week or so," said Kufuor. He asked the USG to "use its network" to "see if something is brewing."

13. (C) Kufuor referred several times to "the recent attack" on Poku as a threat to national security. Kufuor appeared to be referring to Kojo Tsikata's statements before the NRC, during which he accused Poku of having supervised abusive interrogation sessions when Tsikata was arrested on coup-plotting charges in the mid-1970s (the bulk of Tsikata's testimony concerned his own role in the murder of several judges in the early 1980s). Kufuor took the time to review the history of the overthrow of the two previous elected Presidents, Busia (69-72) and Limann (79-81), both toppled by military coup-d'etat before the end of their four year terms. He said that Rawlings' NDC "knows" it cannot win the December elections fairly, and "hates" being in opposition.

14. (C) Suggestions from unnamed sources had also reached Kufuor, he said, that President Compaore of Burkina Faso was "unhappy" with Kufuor and his government. Kufuor had no details, but he suggested that the "hidden hand" of Kojo Tsikata was evident in this potential souring of relations

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with Burkina Faso. Rawlings' political party, the NDC, was "in contact" with the government of Burkina Faso, he said, and would "use anything" to injure the Kufuor Administration.

Tsikata (estranged from Rawlings for several years) had his own contacts and would not hesitate to cause trouble for the GOG. Kufuor said he had tried, unsuccessfully, to reach Compaore by telephone, but would see him at the AU Summit and make a point of speaking to him.

15. (C) Comment. As we said recently (ref A), we see no serious threat to the security of the Kufuor Administration from Rawlings or his supporters. Compaore's level of "unhappiness" we cannot judge -- we defer to our colleagues in Ouagadougou. The absence of the President and Francis Poku, the even-tempered director of the GOG security team, means that more nervous observers of the political scene, including President Kufuor's brother, Defense Minister Addo-Kufuor, may grow even more fearful about the alleged threat presented by Rawlings. The President seems more level-headed. When the Ambassador shared with the President that Rawlings had invited her to meet him informally, Kufuor encouraged the Ambassador to do so. We think nervousness within the GOG must be seen in the context of increasing election fever in Ghana, and political maneuvering between the Kufuor Administration and the opposition NDC. End comment.

Yates